THE LAST AXA

THREE STORIES!

- THE ESCAPIST
- THE STARSTRUCK
- THE BETRAYED (unfinished)

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

AXA 9

by AVENELL & Romero

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If you had opened the pages of London's *Evening Standard* during early September of 1986, you might have thought you were caught in a time warp. Surely this was Jim Holdaway's art on *Modesty Blaise* again: the superb use of solid blacks contrasted with fine lines, and the flowing depiction of movement. Modesty's face was gaunt and hungry and English. Then the illusion would have been dispelled upon noticing the credit for artist Neville Colvin.

Later that month (September 16) the feeling of *deja vu* would have become almost scary. On that day a new story, "Butch Cassidy Rides Again," began, and it was drawn by E. B. Romero. Again there was the sensuous, full-lipped Modesty that the *Evening Standard* readers had come to love throughout the 70's. She again had a more rounded figure and her eyes were large and saucer-like.

Now, nearly two years later, Romero is still drawing *Modesty Blaise*. He is fully committed to the strip and accepts few other commissions. The latest Modesty story began on Monday, May 9, 1988, and is entitled "Milord." It starts with a very intriguing Aztec scene.

Unfortunately, the reason for Romero's return to Modesty was due to the unceremonious dumping, mid-story, of his own creation, *AXA*, by *The Sun*, a national newspaper. There were no other newspapers in Britian to save it from extinction.

The system of strip publication here is quite different from that of the U.S.A. Although we do have a local press, the field is totally dominated by national newspapers which have massive, nationwide circulation (*The Sun's* is over four million). These papers commission their own strips and have total control over them. As the papers are available in all parts of the country, there is no need for strips to appear in more than one newspaper. There are no syndicates, as such, here. All the top strips are exclusive to their one paper. (*Modesty Blaise* is a notable exception. Its home is a London paper, the *Evening Standard*).

The major drawback to this situation is that when a strip is cancelled by a paper, it is truly the end of the strip. If there were a parallel situation in America, a new editor without a matching sense of humor could be hired and subsequently throw *Bloom County* out of his newspaper and into oblivion. Virtually no strips survive the whims of their editors.

Romero's English agent had hoped that *AXA* would be continued in other European newspapers. There was even talk of another British newspaper taking her under its wing. But unfortunately, neither happened. Rejection by *The Sun*, by far Britain's largest newspaper, was insurmountable.

It has proved impossible to find out exactly why *AXA* was dropped. The editor of *The Sun*, Kelvin MacKenzie, does not make himself available for comment; and predictably, there was no explanation in the paper itself. One rumor I've heard is that it was considered too slow moving. This is a disadvantage all action strips share, compared to humor strips with their daily punch lines.

I recently received a letter from the deputy editor of *The Sun*, Miss Pat Chapman, which stated, "It was the editors' decision to withdraw *AXA* as it was felt that it had run its course in *The Sun*."

So now Romero draws *Modesty Blaise*, and writer Donne Avenell still writes *James Bond*, *The Saint* and Disney for Scandinavian consumption.

— *John Dakin*
London, Summer, 1988

IT'S A PLEASURE TO BE DRAWN BY YOUR CREATOR, AXA!
HE'S YOURS FOR NOW, MODESTY, BUT REMEMBER, HE BELONGS TO ME!
MODESTY BLAISE © Solo Syndication
AXA © E. B. Romero Associates

On November 16, 1985, *The Sun* suddenly stopped publishing *AXA* at strip number 2238. No explanation was given to her readers—or to me; there wasn't anything convincing to say. According to the paper, *AXA*, after running for more than eight years, was to be replaced by another strip. Evidently little consideration was given to the fact that she was then appearing in 18 countries and had attracted the interest of two film companies.

AXA is currently on hold—but still lives on, for now, in the publications of my good friend and promoter, Ken Pierce. (While I was between pictures, so to speak, Ken and I, with the help of Dean Mullaney of Eclipse Comics, launched *AXA Comics*. Three issues were completed. But, as Ken told me when we started, "Maestro, a syndicate I'm not.")

I must state, though, that the disturbing action taken by one English editor was compensated for by that of another: after an eight year hiatus, I was offered the opportunity to again take on Peter O'Donnell's renowned *Modesty Blaise*.

Así es la vida.

— *E. B. Romero*
Barcelona, Summer, 1988

Nothing lasts forever. Just as AXA's robot, Mark-Ten, supposedly her ally and true friend, turned against her, her British newspaper strip was cancelled in mid-story. Here are the final three stories. The last story (unfinished) is appropriately and ironically entitled "The Betrayed." This book, together with the previous (still available) eight volumes, present the entire strip, beginning to end. Enjoy.

AXA
THE ESCAPIST
FIREWORKS?
THEY'RE FROM A MAGIC CITY, OVER THE HORIZON!
LEAVING PILL CITY AND ITS HEART-SEARCHING MEMORIES, AXA HAS REACHED A STONY FLATLAND AND THE SHELTER OF A LONELY FARM . . .
IT'S AN AMUSEMENT PARK, REALLY. WHERE PEOPLE GO FOR HOLIDAYS . . . THEY CALL IT GALALAND . . .
I'D LIKE TO SEE IT . . .
SO WOULD WE! DAD'S GOING TO TAKE US THERE, ONE DAY . . .
OH YES, DAD WILL TAKE US TO GALALAND ONE DAY . . . AND THAT'S ALWAYS TOMORROW!
YOUR FATHER'S BUSY WITH THE FARM, I KNOW. BUT HE'S GOT MATT AND I TO HELP HIM NOW . . .
IF YOU'RE SUGGESTING I TAKE A HOLIDAY, FORGET IT!
YOU DON'T JUST ACCEPT A LIVING FROM THIS SOIL . . . YOU SEIZE IT!
OH WE'VE GOT PLENTY OF TOOLS, GOOD STEEL OF THE OLD PEOPLE'S . . . BUT NO POWER TO DRIVE THEM . . .
IF I DON'T WORK, ALL DAY AND EVERY DAY, WE'LL STARVE!
ARE YOU TRYING TO PERSUADE ABEL TO TAKE A HOLIDAY, AXA? WASTE OF TIME!
THE PLOUGHING HAS TO BE DONE FIRST . . . AND IT'S A LONG JOB, WITH ONE OLD WOODEN SHARE AND A HALF-STARVED DONKEY TO PULL IT . . .
MAYBE I'LL TAKE YOU ALL TO GALALAND NEXT MONTH . . .
MAYBE NEVER . . .

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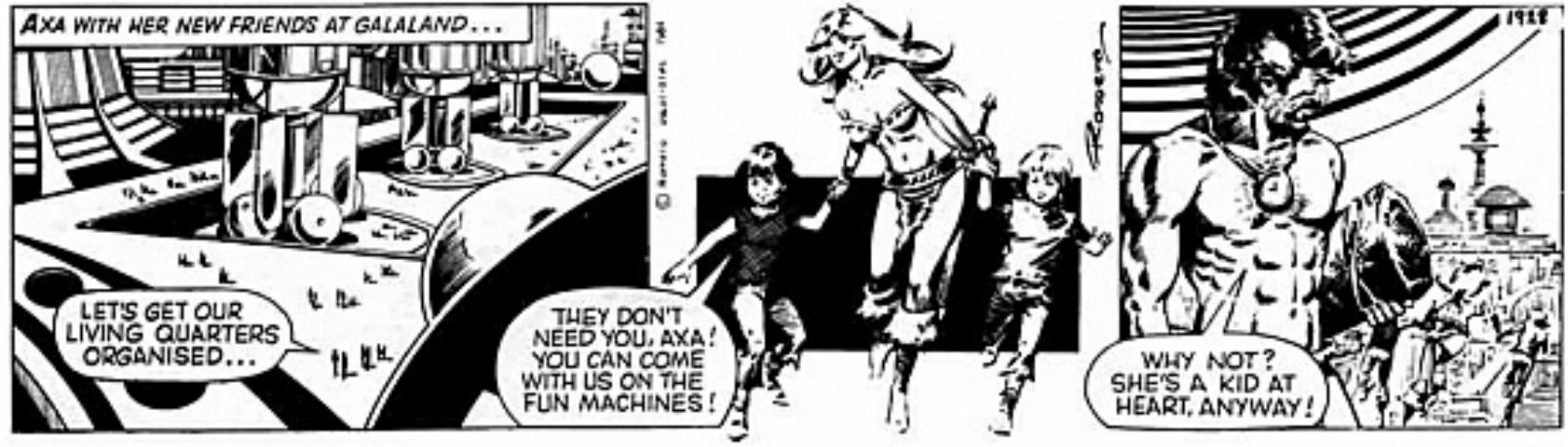
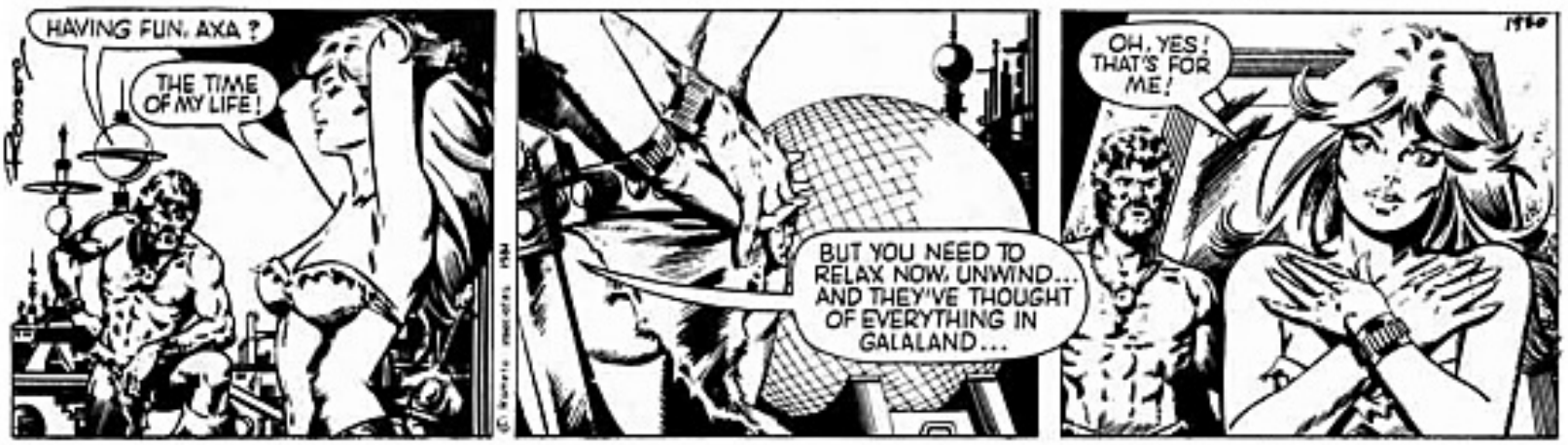
ISBN: 0-912277-36-X

NEXT MORNING...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
ALMOST AS WONDERFUL! THE FARMLAND'S BEEN PLOUGHED!
WHAT'S HAPPENED? THE PLAIN BLOOMED WITH FLOWERS OVERNIGHT?
THE JOB THAT WOULD HAVE TAKEN ABEL A MONTH... ALL DONE IN A FEW HOURS!
THERE'S YOUR MIRACLE-WORKER...
ROBOT MARK!
NO MIRACLE. JUST A POWERPACK- ON OVERDRIVE
AND A WARM MASTER-CIRCUIT! YOU'RE A DARLING, MARK!
THERE YOU ARE, ABEL! YOUR LAND'S BEEN PLOUGHED FOR YOU!
SO NOW I CAN TAKE A HOLIDAY? YOU WIN, AXA!
BUT BEFORE I TAKE YOU ALL TO GALALAND, THERE'S ONE CONDITION... THE ROBOT MUST STAY BEHIND WITH THE OLD FOLK, AND LOOK AFTER THE FARM...
YOU DON'T MIND, MARK. DO YOU?
HRMPH!
HOORAY! WE'RE GOING TO THE MAGIC CITY!
OH ABEL, THAT'S WHAT WE NEED IN OUR HARD LIFE...A LITTLE MAGIC...
I THINK MARK'S PEEVED AT BEING LEFT BEHIND...
A FARMER NOW, AM I? MIGHT AS WELL LOOK THE PART!
A ROBOT WITH A SENSE OF HUMOUR... THAT'S THE KIND OF CRAZY THING WE'LL BE SEEING AT GALALAND...

AXA, WITH THE SETTLER AND HIS FAMILY, TRAVEL TOWARDS THE PLEASURE CITY OF GALA-LAND...
FIRST HOLIDAY I'VE TAKEN IN SIXTEEN YEARS ... AND I FEEL GUILTY...
EVERYONE NEEDS TO RELAX, ABEL... EVEN A FARMER SCRATCHING A HARD-EARNED LIVING FROM THIS STONY PLAIN...
1924
AND NOW I KNOW WHY THEY CALL IT THE BIG DUST...
1926
LET'S FIND SOME SHELTER... BEFORE WE CHOKE TO DEATH...
YOU THINK I'M AN IRON MAN, AXA... HARD AS THIS BARREN COUNTRY... BUT I HAVE MY DREAMS...
NOT OFTEN I HOLD ONE OF THEM IN MY ARMS!
NO! FORGET THAT!
A MAN HAS HIS DUTY... TO HIS WORK, EVEN IF IT'S THANKLESS TO HIS OWN WOMAN...
1926
WE'LL SOON BE IN GALALAND, RUTH... THIS IS YOUR HOLIDAY, AS WELL AS MINE...
TWO DAYS LATER...
IT REALLY IS MAGIC, ISN'T IT?
COO!
GALALAND... A THREE-DIMENSIONAL FANTASY IN STEEL AND GLASS AND CONCRETE... THE ULTIMATE PLAYGROUND...
1987
AN ESCAPE FROM HARSH REALITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS... A MAN-MADE HEAVEN ON A MAN-DESTROYED EARTH...


AXA WITH HER NEW FRIENDS AT GALALAND...
LET'S GET OUR LIVING QUARTERS ORGANISED...
THEY DON'T NEED YOU, AXA! YOU CAN COME WITH US ON THE FUN MACHINES!
WHY NOT? SHE'S A KID AT HEART, ANYWAY!

A 21ST-CENTURY PLAYGROUND FOR AXA...
EEEEH!
IT'S THRILLING, YES! LIKE THE KICK I GET WITH A SWORD IN MY HAND, AND MY LIFE TO FIGHT FOR!
ONLY THIS THRILL IS HARMLESS, INNOCENT, PURE TERROR!


HAVING FUN, AXA?
THE TIME OF MY LIFE!
BUT YOU NEED TO RELAX NOW, UNWIND... AND THEY'VE THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING IN GALALAND...
OH, YES! THAT'S FOR ME!

A NEW SENSATION FOR AXA, IN THE FANTASTIC PLEASURE CITY OF GALALAND...
A ZERO-GRAVITY CHAMBER...
WHERE THE HEAVY CHAINS THAT SHACKLE THE HUMAN RACE ARE STRUCK OFF...
... AND WEIGHTLESS, FREED FROM THE SOLID EARTH... YOU FLOAT ON AIR...

OUT OF MY WAY, DOLL!
BACK TO EARTH, WITH A BUMP...
BUT NO-ONE PUSHES ME AROUND!
IGNORE THEM, AXA... THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF TEARAWAYS...
AND I HATE BULLIES!
1982
HEY!
A BRAWL? WE CAN'T HAVE THAT IN GALALAND!
BACK OFF, AXA!
THE AUTHORITIES ARE HERE! LEAVE THE TEARAWAYS TO THEM!
1983
AUTHORITY? ONE LITTLE MAN IN A HOVER-CAR? HOW CAN HE DEAL WITH THOSE THUGS?
1984
I'LL SHOW YOU...
THRUUUM!
UUH...
FANTASTIC!
THE THUGS HAVE BEEN PARALYSED... BY SOME KIND OF RAY...
A SIMPLE FORCE-FIELD... STANDARD FOR CROWD CONTROL IN GALALAND... MY SECURITY STAFF WILL DEAL WITH THE OFFENDERS...
1985
YOUR STAFF? THEN YOU MUST BE...
GALA! CREATOR OF THIS PLEASURE CITY!

I'M AXA...
A GIRL OF SPIRIT, OBVIOUSLY... AND INTELLIGENT, TOO...
TELL ME, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HISTORY? IF SO, YOU WILL APPRECIATE MY LATEST CREATION...
A TIME-MACHINE!
YOU MEAN...
YES, MY DEAR ...THIS MACHINE OF MINE WILL TAKE YOU BACK INTO THE PAST...
HOW FAR BACK?
OH, SHALL WE SAY TWO THOUSAND YEARS? I HAVE IN MIND A CHARACTER WHO SHOULD INTEREST YOUR AXA...
AXA WARPED INTO THE PAST BY GALA'S TIME MACHINE...
I RECOGNISE THE SOLDIERS FROM THE DATA-BANK IN THE DOME... A ROMAN PHALANX...
AND A WOMAN IN A CHARIOT, DEFYING THEM... A WOMAN AFTER MY OWN HEART. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO SHE IS...
QUEEN OF THE ICENI, AN ENGLISH TRIBE OF THE FIRST CENTURY... LIKE AXA, A REBEL... BOADICEA...
NOW I'LL SWITCH MY TIME-MACHINE TO THE 15TH CENTURY... AND ANOTHER CHARACTER AXA WILL IDENTIFY WITH...
AH, I KNOW HER...
A PASSIONATE REBEL... CHAMPION OF HER OPPRESSED PEOPLE... INSPIRED BUT DESTROYED BY HER FAITH...
JOAN OF ARC!

GALA ADJUSTS HIS TIME-MACHINE...
CALAMITY JANE!
A GUN-TOTING BAWD ON THE WILD FRONTIER OF THE AMERICAN WEST...
HISTORY IN THE DATA-BANK AT THE DOME WAS NEVER LIKE THIS!
BUT I CAN SWITCH MY TIME-MACHINE TO THE FUTURE, TOO... AXA'S FUTURE...
A STRANGE PLANET... FANTASTIC GALAXIES IN THE BLACK NIGHT OF SPACE...
AND ME THERE, TO SEE IT...
WILL IT REALLY BE LIKE THIS?
AH NO! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF TIME-TRAVELLING!
THIS MACHINE OF YOURS IS A FAKE, GALA, ANYWAY! JUST A FAIRGROUND SIDE-SHOW, ISN'T IT?
CAN I REALLY WARP PEOPLE ACROSS THE TIME-ZONE, YOU MEAN? DECIDE FOR YOURSELF, AXA!
I CAN'T MAKE GALA OUT... IS HE THE CHERUBIC LITTLE CHARACTER HE SEEMS?
OR IS HE SINISTER?
RELAX, AXA...
THIS IS WHAT WE CAME TO GALALAND FOR, ISN'T IT? TO GET THE WRINKLES OUT OF OUR SOULS?

A WEEK IN GALALAND FOR AXA AND HER FRIENDS... CARELESS DAYS OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETFULNESS... OUT OF THIS WORLD...
THIS SHOULD LOOK GOOD ON ME...
BUT NOT IN A DISTORTING MIRROR!
MAGIC, AXA, ISN'T IT?

ABEL'S CHILDREN ARE ENJOYING THEMSELVES TOO...
COME AND LOOK AT THIS PLACE, AXA! IT'S DAD'S FAVOURITE!
A BUILDING MADE OF VAPOUR! SHAPED LIKE A CLOUD?
THEY CALL IT DREAM-WORLD!
WHAT'S SO FASCINATING ABOUT THIS, TO A GRIM OLD MAN LIKE ABEL?

I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT FASCINATES ME...
OH! ABEL!
YOU SIMPLY CLOSE YOUR EYES AND DAYDREAM... THE MACHINE PICKS UP YOUR MENTAL VISION...
THUM
... AND PROJECTS IT THREE-DIMENSIONALLY...
I SEE!

I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO BE PART OF YOUR DREAM, ABEL...
HELL, I'M NOT DREAMING NOW... THIS IS FOR REAL...
TWILIGHT! A BED! AND AXA IN MY ARMS!

NO! THIS MAY BE YOUR DREAM, BUT IT'S NOT MINE!
EVERYONE ELSE RELAXES IN GALALAND... ACTS OUT HIS FANTASIES... WHY CAN'T I?
OH, NO! RUTH!
NO PLACE FOR A MAN'S WIFE, THIS DREAMWORLD, IS IT?
1948
1949
I'VE WORN MYSELF OUT FOR ABEL... GIVEN HIM CHILDREN, WORKED HIS FARM...
SO NOW I'M NO LONGER DESIRABLE TO HIM... NOT A DREAM LOVER, JUST A WIFE...
BUT YOU CAN DREAM TOO, RUTH...
OH YES! THAT'S WHY I COME TO DREAMWORLD...
AND THAT'S YOUR DREAM?
LOVELY, ISN'T IT?
NO MORE PAIN... NO MORE WORK... JUST REST AND PEACE...
YOU CAN KEEP DREAMWORLD! I'LL TAKE THE REAL ONE!
1950
BUT WHAT'S THIS? ANGRY PEOPLE, IN GALALAND?
HE'S A PHONEY!
THROW HIM IN THE LAKE!
SPLASH!
OH NO! ROBOT MARK!
1951

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MARK? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO STAY AT THE FARM!
GLURG! ROBOTS GET BORED TOO, YOU KNOW!
AND IF THEY REFUSE TO ENTERTAIN THE CUSTOMERS AT GALALAND, THEY GET WET!
HE'LL NEED PREVENTITIVE TREATMENT FOR RUST...
AND I KNOW JUST THE MAN TO HANDLE HIM...
GALA'S WORKSHOP...
YOU OWN A PRIVATE ROBOT, AXA? FASCINATING!
HE WAS MADE FOR ME BY A SCIENTIST IN THE VALLEY OF MIST... BUT HE ISN'T A SLAVE, YOU KNOW...
HRMPH! CERTAINLY NOT!
NO, MARK'S A DEAR FRIEND... IN FACT, I CAN'T BEAR TO SEE HIM DISMANTLED...
HE'S PROGRAMMED TO FEEL EMOTION...
I ALWAYS WANTED TO BUILD A ROBOT MYSELF, YOU KNOW...
SO I SEE... INGENIOUS WORKMANSHIP...
WELL, MARK'S OFTEN LONELY...
REALLY? WHY DON'T I PROVIDE HIM WITH A ROBOT GIRL-FRIEND, THEN?
DID YOU HEAR THAT, MARK? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A GIRL FRIEND?
COR!
LET'S CONCEPTUALISE... WITH A HOLOGRAM OF A FEMALE ROBOT...
ANOTHER OF YOUR WHIMSICALITIES, GALA?

MEET MY CHIEF ASSISTANT... LIX...
A ROBOT, EH? I PREFER ANDROIDS, MYSELF...
DON'T GRAB MARK LIKE THAT! HE'S NOT JUST A LUMP OF METAL!
LEAVE IT TO ME, AXA... I'LL DESIGN A FEMALE ROBOT YOUR MARK WILL BE PROUD OF...
GALA TAKES ME SERIOUSLY... NOT LIKE THAT INSENSITIVE FELLOW LIX...
1987
LOOK! IT'S AXA'S TOY MAN!
REALLY! THIS IS TOO MUCH!
YOU MUSTN'T BE SO TOUCHY, MARK... THE CHILDREN DIDN'T MEAN TO INSULT YOU...
THEY'VE RUN WILD, HERE IN GALALAND... BUT WE'RE LEAVING TOMORROW...
OH NO, DAD!
YOU HEARD ME! I'M TAKING YOU BACK TO THE BIG DUST, WHERE WE ALL BELONG!
1987
BUT WE'VE ONLY BEEN IN GALALAND A WEEK, DAD...
A WEEK TOO LONG!
MUST WE GO BACK TO THE FARM SO SOON, DEAR?
YES, I SAY! YES! OR THERE WON'T BE ANY FARM TO GO BACK TO!
DON'T BE SO HARD ON THEM, ABEL... ON YOURSELF, EITHER...

YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS, AXA! YOU OF ALL PEOPLE!
WHY DO YOU THINK I'M LEAVING GALALAND TOMORROW? GOING BACK TO THAT DAMNED JOYLESS FARM OF MINE?
BECAUSE I CAN'T RESIST THE TEMPTATION HERE, THAT'S WHY!
1960

YES! YOU'RE THE TEMPTATION, AXA! YOU'RE MY FORBIDDEN DREAM!
GET PACKED, RUTH! YOU AND I HAVE A HARD LIFE TO LIVE... AND WE'RE RUNNING AWAY FROM IT HERE...
MAYBE ABEL'S GOT A POINT... MAYBE WE ALL OUGHT TO LEAVE GALA-LAND...
1961

I AM NOT LEAVING GALALAND YET! NO WAY!
WHAT'S GOT INTO THAT CRANKY ROBOT NOW?
I FORGOT! GALA PROMISED TO CONSTRUCT HIM A GIRL-FRIEND...
NEXT DAY...
1962
COME ON, MARK... LET'S FIND OUT HOW THAT FEMALE ROBOT IS SHAPING...

DON'T BE NERVOUS, MARK... YOUR GIRLFRIEND WON'T BE FINISHED YET, ANYWAY...
THE FEMALE ROBOT? I'VE MOULDED HER TORSO...
HMPHH! DELECTABLE!

OH!
WHY, MARK, IT'S LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT!
GROTESQUE! THAT ROBOT'S A LECHEROUS FREAK!
TCHAH!
LIX SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT...
1964
KRUNCH!
STOP HIM, AXA! OR HE'LL KILL LIX!
HE DIDN'T MEAN TO INSULT YOU, MARK! DON'T BLOW YOUR FUSES!
1965
PLEASE, MARK! BE A NICE ROBOT! FOR MY SAKE!
HRMPH! WHAT WOULD A SCIENTIST KNOW ABOUT LOVE, ANYWAY?
I KNOW ABOUT REVENGE, THOUGH...
1966
I WANT TO CALL ON ABEL AND HIS FAMILY... ARE YOU COMING, MATT?
LEAVE HIM ALONE, AXA... HE'S GOT A FEMALE ROBOT ON HIS MIND...
ABEL THREATENED TO LEAVE GALALAND TODAY... BUT HE MUST HAVE STAYED AFTER ALL...
1967

I MEAN, ABEL WOULDN'T LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE TO US, WOULD HE?
WOULDN'T HE?
THE FARMER FROM THE BIG DUST? CHECKED OUT LAST NIGHT WITH HIS FAMILY!
ARE YOU SURE THE FAMILY'S LEFT?
NO ONE SAW THEM GO... BUT THEY'RE NOT HERE NOW!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND... HOW COULD THEY LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING A WORD?
THE CHILDREN WERE FOND OF ME...
SO WAS ABEL, WASN'T HE?
STOP SULKING, AXA! YOU KNOW OLD ABEL WAS HOOKED ON YOU!
WHAT'S NEEDLING YOU IS THAT HE GOT OFF THE HOOK!
KRASH!
IT WAS ONLY A JOKE, AXA!
NO, IT WASN'T!
I DON'T HOOK MEN, AS YOU PUT IT... YOUNG ONES, OR OLD ONES LIKE ABEL...
YOU DON'T MEAN TO...
IT'S THAT FACE OF YOURS... THAT BODY ... YOU CAN'T HELP BEWITCHING THEM...

LEAVE ME ALONE, MATT... I NEED TO THINK...
DAMN MEN ...AND THEIR APPETITES... THE POOR, HELPLESS, LUSTFUL DEVILS...
BUT WHAT'S GOING ON THERE, AT THE LAKESIDE ...AT DEAD OF NIGHT?
1972
MYSTERIOUS BUSINESS AT GALALAND...
IF IT'S OFFICIAL BUSINESS, WHY AREN'T THEY USING LIGHTS?
PEOPLE TRUCKED TO THE LAKESIDE, THEN HERDED ON TO A BOAT...
MOVE!
OH!
1972
YOU'RE NOT SECURITY GUARDS...MORE LIKE TOURISTS, ONLY YOU'RE ARMED!
HAVE I SEEN SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T?
WHAT ARE YOU? A ZOMBIE?
YOU'RE POLICING THAT SECRET OPERATION AT THE LAKESIDE, AREN'T YOU?
ALL RIGHT...
GET HER!
THAT ANSWERS MY QUESTION...

AXA ! WHAT'S WRONG ?
I'M NOT SURE...
BUT GALALAND ISN'T THE INNOCENT PLEASURE CITY WE THOUGHT IT WAS . . .
NEXT MORNING . . .
PRISONERS BEING TRANSPORTED TO THE LAKE, UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS ? SOUNDS CRAZY... BUT LET'S INVESTIGATE...
IT MAY SOUND CRAZY, MATT . . . BUT I SAW THOSE PRISONERS LAST NIGHT, HERE ON THIS JETTY...
THERE'S ONLY ONE STRUCTURE ON THE LAKE...ONE PLACE THE PRISONERS COULD HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED TO...
AND IT'S OPEN TO TOURISTS... JUST A NORMAL GALALAND ATTRACTION...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT...
DON'T TRY, AXA !
JUST DANCE !
OH, ALL RIGHT... THIS IS A FLOATING BALLROOM... WHERE TOURISTS CAN ROMANCE ON THE LAKE...
NOTHING SINISTER ABOUT IT...
BUT SOMETHING ODD IS GOING ON IN GALALAND, I'M SURE OF THAT...
IMAGINATION, AXA . . . YOU'RE UNEASY BECAUSE ABEL'S FAMILY LEFT WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE . . .
RELAX ! IT'S ALL IN YOUR MIND !

BUT EVEN THIS SHOOTING-GALLERY SEEMS SINISTER TO ME...
AS IF THOSE DUMMIES WERE REAL PEOPLE... FLESH AND BLOOD PIERCED BY THE LASER-BEAM...
YOU REALLY ARE SPOOKED, AREN'T YOU?
AXA PASSES A TROUBLED WEEK...
DO WE HAVE TO KEEP PROWLING AROUND GALALAND AFTER DARK?
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN... AND NOW IT HAS!
IT'S YOU, MARK!
COME QUICKLY! TO GALA'S WORKSHOP!
THAT OBNOXIOUS SCIENTIST LIX IS INSIDE THE WORK-SHOP!
SO WHAT? HE'S GALA'S ASSISTANT...
BUT GALA'S NOT HERE... LIX IS ALONE... AND YOU HEARD HIM THREATEN ME...
BUT WHY WOULD LIX COME HERE TO GET HIS REVENGE?
OF COURSE! THE FEMALE ROBOT GALA IS CONSTRUC-TING!
LIX MIGHT TRY TO HURT MARK THROUGH HIS EMBRYONIC GIRL FRIEND!
I'M READY FOR YOU THIS TIME, ROBOT!

DUR!
MARK! WHAT'S LIX DONE TO YOU?
HE'S IMMOBILISED... POWERLESS...
I WAS ONLY PROTECTING MYSELF FROM THAT METAL MANIAC... I HAVEN'T DAMAGED HIM...
BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN GALA'S WORKSHOP, ANYWAY? AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?
YOU'VE BEEN TAMPERING WITH THE FEMALE ROBOT, HAVEN'T YOU? SABOTAGING HER!
WELL, LIX, HAVE YOU? I WANT AN EXPLANATION!
1985
IT'S ALL NONSENSE! I WAS SIMPLY CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR NEW ROBOT'S CONTROL SYSTEM!
I'M SURE HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH, AXA... WE SCIENTISTS ARE AN INQUISITIVE LOT, YOU KNOW...
I DON'T TRUST LIX...
OH, BUT HE'S A BRILLIANT CHAP... I'VE EVEN GIVEN HIM A FREE HAND TO DESIGN HIS OWN SIDE-SHOWS IN GALA-LAND...
THERE, YOUR ROBOT'S FUNCTIONAL AGAIN...
WHICH SIDESHOWS HAS LIX DESIGNED, GALA?
OH, THE FLOATING BALLROOM ON THE LAKE... A SHOOTING GALLERY... AND AN INGENIOUS LITTLE THING HE CALLS THE PSYCHEDELIA...
COME ON, MARK... WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO...

PSYCHEDELIA
WE'RE GOING TO INVESTIGATE LIX, ARE WE ?
AND THE SIDESHOWS HE'S DESIGNED...
IF WE CAN GET INSIDE THEM...
NO PROBLEM!
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE THIS PSYCHEDELIA BUILDING ?
NO ENTRY
LET'S FIND OUT, SHALL WE ? THERE'S A CONTROL ROOM IN HERE...
ACTION!
AXA AND MATT INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS SIDESHOW IN GALALAND...
DAZZLING LIGHTS AND POUNDING MUSIC... WHAT THE OLD PEOPLE CALLED A PSYCHEDELIC SHOW...
BUT IF IT WAS DESIGNED BY LIX, IT MUST HAVE A SINISTER PURPOSE...
UUH... THE LIGHTS ARE MAKING ME DIZZY...
TSK! FOOLS RUSH IN!
YOU SHOULD HAVE WAITED FOR ME, AXA! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? AXA!

HYPNOTISED BY THE LIGHTS, BOTH OF THEM... LUCKILY MY CIRCUITS ARE RESISTANT...
WAKE UP, AXA...
HUH?
SO THAT'S WHAT LIX IS UP TO... PUTTING HIS VICTIMS INTO A HYPNOTIC TRANCE!
1992

MATT HAD MORE OF THE TREATMENT THAN I DID... HE'S STILL HYPNOTISED...
SNAP OUT OF IT, MATT! MATT! OH HELL, IT'S NO USE...
FIND GALA AND TELL HIM WHAT'S HAPPENED, MARK! HURRY!
1993

THAT DAMNED ROBOT... LEAVING MY PSYCHEDELIA IN A HURRY...
AXA AND HER MAN! CONVENIENTLY HYPNOTISED... BY THE LOOK OF THEM!
SO I HAVE UNINVITED VISITORS...
PSYCHEDELIA
1994

SNOOPING, WERE YOU, AXA? SERVES YOU RIGHT, THEN!
LIX! AND HE THINKS I'M STILL HYPNOTISED!
SO I'LL LET HIM GO ON THINKING IT...
YES, THE POOR FOOLS SWITCHED ON MY APPARATUS ... PUT THEMSELVES IN A TRANCE...
1995

YOU'RE NOT JUST PRETENDING TO BE HYPNOTISED, ARE YOU AXA?
OF COURSE NOT... NO WOMAN COULD BE THAT CLEVER...
SO PICK HER UP, MATT! WE MUSTN'T DAMAGE THAT LOVELY BODY!
1996
GALA'S SINISTER ASSISTANT DECEIVED BY AXA...
CARRY HER TO THE LAKESIDE!
NOW I'LL FIND OUT WHAT LIX DOES WITH THE HUMAN ZOMBIES HE CREATES...
WE'RE GOING FOR A MOONLIGHT TRIP ON THE LAKE, AXA... SUCH A PITY YOU'RE NOT ABLE TO ENJOY IT...
1997
YOU WERE CURIOUS ABOUT MY FLOATING BALLROOM ON THE LAKE, WEREN'T YOU AXA?
BY DAY, AN INNOCENT ADDITION TO THE GAIETY AND ROMANCE OF GALALAND...
BY NIGHT, A RECEPTION CENTRE FOR THE SUBJECTS OF MY EXPERIMENT IN HYPNOSIS...
1998
IT'S A DANCE FLOOR, YOU POOR FOOLS! SO DANCE!
BUT FROM NOW ON, YOU'LL DANCE TO MY TUNE...
HUH?
1999

SO THAT'S THE SECRET OF LIX'S FLOATING BALLROOM...
UNDERNEATH IT, ON THE BED OF THE LAKE, HE'S BUILT HIMSELF A PRIVATE STRONGHOLD HIDDEN FROM GALA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD...
A CANCER CELL IN THE CAREFREE HEART OF GALA-LAND...
1000
YOU FOOL, MATT, STOP DANCING! LET GO OF ME!
BUT HE'S ONLY OBEYING LIX'S ORDERS ... LIKE THE OTHER POOR DEVILS IN THIS UNDER-WATER PRISON...
GALALAND TOURISTS, BRAIN-WASHED AND TRANSPORTED HERE LIKE THE ONES I SAW ON THE LAKESIDE THAT NIGHT...
2001
OH NO! HERE'S THE ANSWER TO ANOTHER MYSTERY...
ABEL! HE DIDN'T LEAVE GALALAND WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE TO ME...
2002
HE WAS BRAIN-WASHED WITH HIS WHOLE FAMILY, AND HIDDEN AWAY HERE UNDER THE LAKE...
WHAT KIND OF MONSTER COULD DO THIS?
TURNING MEN INTO BRAINLESS ZOMBIES, WITHOUT A WILL OF THEIR OWN...
2003
NOT DANCING, AXA? NOT OBEYING MY ORDERS?
Romero

COME HERE, YOU BITCH!
HE MUSTN'T GUESS THAT I'M ONLY PRETENDING TO BE BRAIN-WASHED...
THAT'S BETTER! FOR A MOMENT I FEARED YOU WERE OUT OF MY CONTROL!
1004
BUT I HAVE VERY SPECIAL PLANS FOR YOU, AXA! COME!
MY SECRET WORKSHOP ... WHERE I'M DESIGNING THE GALALAND OF THE FUTURE...
MY GALALAND... NOT THE VULGAR FAIRGROUND OF THAT FOOL GALA...
2006
GALA WANTS TO TAKE PEOPLE'S MINDS OFF THEIR TROUBLES...
A FUTILE EXERCISE... I SHALL TAKE THEIR MINDS AWAY ALTOGETHER...
BUT I DIDN'T BRING YOU HERE TO TALK TO YOU! LIE DOWN!
2004
YOUR MIND I CAN DO WITHOUT... BUT I NEED YOUR BODY...
NO!
YOU MAY BE AN ANIMAL! I'M NOT!
2007

SO YOU TRICKED ME! YOU WERE NEVER HYPNOTISED! NEVER IN MY POWER!
AND NOW YOU KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT ME...
Romero
I KNOW THAT YOU'RE CRAZY, LIX...
AN EGOMANIAC WHO USES A LASER-GUN AS AN ARGUMENT...
BUT NOT EVEN YOU WOULD SHOOT AT ME NOW... WITH THAT GLASS WALL BEHIND ME...
NO! YOU FOOL!
THERE'S ONLY THAT GLASS WALL BETWEEN US AND THE WATERS OF THE LAKE!
OR THERE WAS...
UUH!
WE'LL DROWN LIKE RATS... UNLESS WE GET OUT OF HERE...
NO! KEEP THAT DOOR CLOSED!
AT LEAST WE HAVE A CHANCE! BUT THE PRISONERS OUT THERE ARE HELPLESS!

WE'RE TRAPPED!
NO...
THERE'S ANOTHER WAY OUT OF THIS UNDERWATER TOMB...
THROUGH THE WINDOW AND INTO THE LAKE!
AXA AND LIX SWIM FOR THEIR LIVES...
TWO LUNGFULS OF AIR BETWEEN ME AND OBLIVION...
UUH!
AHH!
GOOD TO BE ALIVE! BUT WHY ARE THOSE BOATS HEADING ACROSS THE LAKE TOWARDS THE FLOATING BALLROOM?
AND WHERE'S LIX?
AGH!
STOP! YOU'VE RUN DOWN LIX!
IT'S AXA!
WHAT'S GOING ON, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE?
HELL, GALA, NOT HEAVEN!

LIX HAS A SECRET HIDEOUT, UNDERNEATH THE FLOATING BALL-ROOM... AT LEAST, HE HAD...
2016
WE BOTH ESCAPED WHEN IT FLOODED... LIX, TO HIS DEATH...

LIX'S HYPNOTISED VICTIMS ARE STILL TRAPPED UNDER THE LAKE...
2017
WE'LL GET THEM OUT, AXA... I ALERTED MY RESCUE SERVICES DIRECTLY YOUR ROBOT TOLD ME THE FACTS...
BUT MY INNOCENT GALALAND, PERVERTED BY LIX'S DEVILRY! I CAN STILL HARDLY BELIEVE IT!

A RESCUE OPERATION AT THE FLOATING BALLROOM...
WAIT, AXA! YOU CAN'T HELP!
BUT MATT'S DOWN THERE, UNDER THE LAKE! AND ABEL WITH HIS FAMILY!
OH, MATT, WILL WE EVER DANCE TOGETHER AGAIN... TO THE MUSIC OF LIFE?
2018

LIX'S VICTIMS ARE ALL SAFE! WE'RE BRINGING THEM UP IN BATCHES!
YOU'VE RESCUED THEM, YES! BUT CAN YOU CURE THEM?
OR WILL THEY STAY HYPNOTISED... THE BRAINLESS ZOMBIES THAT LIX CREATED?

MATT!
CALM YOURSELF, AXA... HE'S ALIVE!
ONLY HALF-ALIVE! OH MATT, YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME!
STAND ASIDE... I'LL DEAL WITH HIM...
1020
MARK! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
AAH!
STOP! HE'S NOT A DEFECTIVE PIECE OF MACHINERY!
1021
YOU ENJOYED THAT, YOU METAL MORON, DIDN'T YOU?
AND GIVEN ME A BROKEN JAW INSTEAD!
DON'T WORRY, AXA! WE CAN CURE MATT WITHOUT SHAKING AND THUMPING HIM!
DON'T BE HARD ON HIM, MATT! HE HAS DE-HYPNOTISED YOU!
1022
LIX'S VICTIMS ARE TAKEN ASHORE FOR REHABILITATION...
THIS HAS SHAKEN ME, AXA...
OH, I CAN DESTROY THE EVIL MACHINES WHICH LIX CREATED... MAKE SURE NOTHING LIKE THIS HAPPENS AGAIN...
BUT GALA-LAND WILL NEVER BE THE SAME...
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ESCAPISM, GALA... UNLESS IT LEADS PEOPLE TO ESCAPE FROM REALITY ALTOGETHER...
1023

NEXT DAY...
RELAX, AXA... SHOCK THERAPY WILL CURE ABEL AND HIS FAMILY...
AND TO TAKE YOUR MINDS OFF IT, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE RATHER SPECIAL...
YOU BUILT HER, GALA? THE NEW FEMALE ROBOT?
I'VE NAMED HER MARTHA...
DON'T BE NERVOUS, MARK...
HMPH! SHE MAY BE JUST A ROBOT TO YOU, BUT TO ME SHE'S... MY HEART'S DESIRE!
THERE SHE IS!
WHERE?
OH! I LOOK SUCH A FRIGHT!
WHY ARE YOU HIDING BEHIND THE CURTAIN, MARTHA?
WHY? YOU'RE LOVELY, MARTHA! DON'T YOU THINK SO, MARK?
I'M SURE THERE'S AN OIL SMUDGE ON MY CHASSIS!
COR!
WELL, MARK?
BULP... ER... I...
I LOVE YOU, MARTHA!
TEE HEE! YOU SILLY THING!
MEN ARE ALL THE SAME, AREN'T THEY, AXA? I DON'T KNOW WHY WE BOTHER WITH THEM!

HMPHH!
OH, MARTHA! YOU'VE OFFENDED HIM NOW!
IF IT DIDN'T SOUND SCREWY, AXA... I'D SAY THAT FEMALE ROBOT WAS HEARTLESS!
I'M SORRY, MARK! I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU! I'M GLAD YOU LIKE ME!
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT... I PROGRAMMED MARTHA TO BE HUMBLE AND ADORING, THE PERFECT PARTNER FOR A MACHO MALE ROBOT...
AND SHE'S TURNED OUT TO BE A MADDENING, BEWITCHING LITTLE FLIRT!
MAYBE LIX SABOTAGED HER CIRCUITS?
GIVE ME THAT BRACELET OF YOURS, AXA... I'LL DESIGN YOU A ROBOT CONTROL SYSTEM...
I MUSTN'T FUSS OVER MARK AND MARTHA... THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT...
LIKE ABEL AND HIS FAMILY? YOU CAN STOP WORRYING NOW!
AXA!
THEY KNOW ME! THEY'RE NO LONGER HYPNOTISED!
WE'RE GOING HOME, AXA!
TO THE FARM! I CAN'T WAIT!
YES. WE'VE ALL RECOVERED... AND NOT JUST FROM THAT BRAIN-WASHING DEVILRY...
WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF GALALAND... AND THERE'S A FUTURE WAITING TO BE BUILT, OUT ON THE BIG DUST...

GOOD LUCK, ABEL...
YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US?
NO... LIKE YOU, I'VE HELD BACK THE CLOCK LONG ENOUGH IN THIS PLEASURE CITY...
BUT THE FUTURE I'M INTERESTED IN IS OVER THE HORIZON...
DON'T FORGET YOUR BRACELET, AXA!
DEPARTURE FROM GALALAND...
IF YOUR ROBOTS WANDER, I'LL TRANSMIT AN IMPULSE TO RECALL THEM!
YOU COULD USE IT ON MARTHA NOW ... SHE'S TAKING HOURS TO GET READY...
DON'T MOVE, MARK! I'VE GOT SOME MORE PARCELS FOR YOU!
WELL YOU DON'T EXPECT A GIRL TO TRAVEL WITHOUT HER SPARE PARTS, DO YOU?
HMPH!
AND YOU DID SAY YOU LOVED ME...
SIGH!
YOU'RE TRAVELLING NORTH, AXA?
THAT'S THE WAY MY FRIEND SOLOM JOURNEYED, MANY YEARS AGO...
HE HELPED ME TO DESIGN GALALAND, BUT HE NEEDED A FRESH CHALLENGE...
SO DO I...

AXA
THE STARSTRUCK
PLANETS, CONSTELLATIONS, GALAXIES... OTHER WORLDS, ISOLATED IN THE PURE INFINITY OF SPACE...
WORLDS WITHOUT PEOPLE...
AXA HAS TRAVELLED NORTH FROM GALALAND... ON A JOURNEY THAT WILL TAKE HER OUT OF THIS WORLD...

AND I'M SO WEARY OF PEOPLE... THEIR PEEVISH EMOTIONS, THEIR ITCHY LITTLE EGOS...

EVEN GALALAND WAS SPOILT BY QUARRELLING PEOPLE... AND THE JOURNEY HERE WITH THE ROBOTS WAS WORSE...

A VEXATIOUS JOURNEY FOR AXA...
DO KEEP UP WITH US, MARK!
I'M DOING MY BEST!

IT'S YOUR BAGGAGE WHICH IS SLOWING ME DOWN, MARTHA!
YOU'RE ALWAYS COMPLAINING! I DON'T BELIEVE YOU LOVE ME AT ALL!

WATCH OUT FOR THE RAVINE...
HMPHH...

DEAR ME! I STUMBLED!

YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE, MARK! JUST TO GET RID OF MY PARCELS!

YOU'VE GOT A SUSPICIOUS MIND, MARTHA!
THAT'S RIGHT! INSULT ME!

STOP IT, BOTH OF YOU! NAG, NAG, NAG! I CAN'T STAND ANY MORE OF IT!

CALM DOWN, AXA...
DON'T YOU START! I'M SICK TO DEATH OF THE LOT OF YOU!

I'M SORRY, MATT... BUT THE ROBOTS HAVE BEEN QUARRELLING EVER SINCE WE LEFT GALALAND...
MAYBE THAT RUIN WILL TAKE YOUR MIND OFF IT, AXA...
AN OBSERVATORY OF THE OLD PEOPLE'S!
THEY STUDIED THE NIGHT SKY FROM PLACES LIKE THIS... CHARTED THE HEAVENS...

A RUINED OBSERVATORY IN THE MOUNTAINS...
THE GIANT TELESCOPE IS STILL INTACT...
HOW EAGERLY THE OLD PEOPLE MUST HAVE PEERED THROUGH IT AT THE UNSULLIED PANORAMA OF SPACE, FROM THEIR OWN SICK PLANET...
OH! AND I KNOW HOW THEY FELT!

YEARNING TO TRAVEL IN THE UNDERWORLD OF SPACE, AXA? CURIOUS...
I SEEM TO REMEMBER YOU SAYING, ONCE, THAT YOUR OWN WORLD WAS WONDERFUL ENOUGH FOR YOU...
WHEN THE MORPHOS EMIGRATED IN THAT ALIEN SPACESHIP? YES... BUT A LOT'S HAPPENED TO ME SINCE THEN...

AND NOW I'D LIKE TO ESCAPE, JUST FOR A TIME, FROM THIS WEARY OLD EARTH AND ITS FRUSTRATED PEOPLE...
TO WANDER IN SPACE... INSTEAD OF JUST LOOKING AT IT THROUGH A TELESCOPE...
WHAT HAVE THE ROBOTS FOUND?
TUNNELS! FOUR OF THEM!
ONE FOR EACH OF US TO EXPLORE!

NO. WE'D BETTER STAY TOGETHER... WE'LL TAKE THE LEFT-HAND TUNNEL...
THE REST OF YOU CAN IF YOU LIKE! I FANCY THE RIGHT-HAND DOORWAY. MYSELF!
HUH! LIX CERTAINLY GAVE THAT ROBOT GIRL-FRIEND OF MARK'S A WILL OF HER OWN!
THREE MORE DOORWAYS... ANOTHER CHOICE TO MAKE...
WE'LL TAKE THE LEFTHAND TUNNEL AGAIN...
HEM! I THINK I'LL GO THE OTHER WAY!
POOR OLD MARK... HE'S GETTING WORRIED ABOUT THAT FLIGHTY GIRLFRIEND OF HIS...
TWO DOORWAYS TO CHOOSE FROM NOW...
DAMN THOSE OLD PEOPLE! WHAT WERE THEY MAKING DOWN HERE, A MAZE?
WE'LL GO RIGHT, THIS TIME...
I'LL CHOOSE FOR MYSELF, THANK YOU!
I'M GOING LEFT!
YOU DO THAT, MATT... IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL BIG...
WE'VE ALL GONE OUR OWN WAY... TYPICAL OF THE HUMAN RACE...
UUH... MY HAND TOUCHED SOMETHING SOFT...
OH. NO!

ANOTHER OF THEM! SOLDIERS, ON GUARD!
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THEM...
THE SKELETON GUARDS DIED AT THEIR POSTS, A HUNDRED YEARS AGO...
THE OLD PEOPLE'S SUB-ORDINATES HAD A TOUCHING DEVOTION TO DUTY... I THOUGHT IT A PITY TO DISTURB THEM...
BUT YOU'RE WONDERING WHO I AM... MY NAME IS SOLOM...
GALA'S SCIENTIST FRIEND!
AH, SO YOU'VE COME FROM THAT FRIVOLOUS CITY OF HIS...
A JOURNEY I MADE MYSELF, YEARS AGO, WHEN I FOUND THE RUINED OBSERVATORY...
AND BENEATH IT IN THE ROCK, THIS SUBTERRANEAN HIDEOUT OF THE OLD PEOPLE'S...
A BOMBPROOF CONTROL CENTRE FOR THE NUCLEAR WARFARE WHICH EVENTUALLY WIPED OUT THEIR CIVILISATION...
THE ABANDONED COMPUTERS WERE STILL IN WORKING ORDER... SOLAR-POWERED, OF COURSE...
THEY WERE DESIGNED TO CONTROL NUCLEAR MISSILES AND SATELLITES IN SPACE...
I'VE SPENT TWENTY YEARS REDESIGNING THEM FOR A LESS BARBAROUS FUNCTION...

YOU'LL FIND THIS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE...
TRY ME...
THESE COMPUTERS ONCE SENT LETHAL IRON-MONGERY INTO SPACE...
NOW THEY SEND ...PEOPLE!
DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE? IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
OH NO!
I'VE SENT MANY PEOPLE ON A JOURNEY INTO SPACE... CURIOUS VISITORS TO THIS CONTROL CENTRE, LIKE YOURSELF...
YOU SIMPLY SIT IN THAT CHAIR ...AND MY COMPUTERS DO THE REST...
AN INCREDIBLE CLAIM BY THE SCIENTIST SOLOM...
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
YOU CAN LAUNCH PEOPLE INTO SPACE FROM HERE? TO TRAVEL AMONG THE STARS?
TRY IT, GIRL... SIT IN THE CHAIR... IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE...
YOU'LL NEED COURAGE, I WARN YOU... SKILL AND INTELLIGENCE, TOO...
OUT THERE IN THE GALACTIC NIGHT, YOU'LL ENCOUNTER FORCES HOSTILE TO TRAVELLERS FROM EARTH...
THEY WILL ASSUME THAT YOU'RE SEEKING THE LOST STAR KEY... BUT PERHAPS I AM STRAINING YOUR CREDULITY...

NO... GO ON...
IF YOU COULD BRING BACK THE KEY, IT MIGHT RESTORE PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO THE HUMAN RACE...
A CHALLENGE... AND I NEVER COULD RESIST THAT...
THE STAR KEY WAS STOLEN FROM EARTH, MILLENNIA AGO, BY AN EVIL GALACTIC INTELLIGENCE...
2056
SO YOU'LL UNDERTAKE THIS QUEST...TO THE DARK FRONTIERS OF THE UNIVERSE?
YES!
AN ADVENTUROUS GIRL... HMM... SHE SHOULD GO FAR...
HER IMPATIENT MIND HAS ALREADY SET OUT, BEFORE HER BODY...
...ON HER FANTASTIC JOURNEY TO THE STARS...
FARE WELL, SPACE-TRAVELLER!
A BLAZE OF LIGHT... A RUSHING WIND...
THE EARTH AND ITS BANAL PARAPHERNALIA DROP AWAY...
2057
AXA IN SPACE...

AXA HURTLES THROUGH SPACE...
TOWARD A STRANGE PLANET...
LOOMING NEARER...
NEARER...
NEARER...
I'M ON COLLISION COURSE... WITH THAT SLAB OF ROCK...
FLESH HITS ROCK...
THE ROCK'S YIELDING...
MOLECULAR STRUCTURE ON THIS PLANET MUST BE WEIRD!
THE SOLID ROCK CHANGED INTO A NET... METAMORPHIC WITH A VENGEANCE!
THE PLANET'S VOLCANIC... BUT AT LEAST THE GROUND HERE IS FLAT...
OR, RATHER— IT WAS FLAT!
ANOTHER METAMORPHOSIS... THE FLAT GROUND BULGING INTO HILLOCKS...
NOW PEBBLES FORMING UNDER MY FEET... THE VERY STONES ALIVE...
AND HOSTILE!

A PLANET WHERE NATURE IS ANIMATE... EVEN HAS EMOTIONS...
STONES THAT RESENT BEING WALKED ON...
BRUSHWOOD THAT FIGHTS BACK WHEN IT'S CUT...
THE ENVIRONMENT ON THIS PLANET IS NOT JUST HOSTILE... IT'S MALICIOUS!
NOW DARKNESS IS FALLING, THE TEMPERATURE DROPPING AND I'VE ONLY GOT A LONE TREE FOR COMPANY...
KRAK
GOOD COMPANY? OR BAD?
THE TREE'S ALIVE, TOO! BREAKING ONE OF ITS BRANCHES INTO STICKS!
NOW TWIGS ARE RUBBING THEMSELVES TOGETHER! MAKING FIRE!
A FIRE TO WARM ME! THE TREE'S MY FRIEND!
DAWN ON THE HOSTILE PLANET...
BUT I HAD A GOOD SLEEP!
THANKS TO YOU, MY WOODY FRIEND... AND THE FIRE YOU MADE FOR ME...
NOW I MUST START ON MY QUEST... THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST STAR KEY...

BUT FIRST I NEED A DRINK...
OH NO! EVEN THE STREAMS ON THIS PLANET ARE ALIVE AND HOSTILE!
TAKE A MOUTHFUL OF WATER... AND IT RETALIATES!
SOLOM WARNED ME I'D ENCOUNTER HOSTILE FORCES IN MY QUEST FOR THE STAR KEY...
SO LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT MY ENEMY. THIS PLANET... FROM THE TOP OF A HILL...
THE ROCK CHANGING SHAPE AGAIN... A FIST PUNCHING OUT OF THE CLIFF...
NO, NOT A FIST... A HAND UNCLENCHING...
I MUST CHOOSE ONE OF THOSE OBJECTS THE HAND IS OFFERING ME...
BUT HOW DO I KNOW WHICH? A VOICE INSIDE MY BRAIN?
THE AXE COULD BE USEFUL, BUT I HAVE MY SWORD... I'LL TAKE THE STRANGE FLINT...
VOLCANOES ERUPTING... THE PLANET BOILING WITH FURY... ITS ANGER DIRECTED AT ME...
DID I MAKE THE WRONG CHOICE? HOW CAN THIS FLINT PROTECT ME?

A VOLCANO ERUPTING UNDER MY FEET! I'LL BE TORN APART!
BUT THE FLINT SHE IS CLUTCHING HAS A STRANGE EFFECT ON AXA...
HER VAPOURISED BODY IS WAFTED SKYWARD BY THE VOLCANIC BLAST...
THE WISP OF VAPOUR WHICH IS AXA DRIFTS INTO SPACE...
...SAFE FROM THE ANGRY PLANET AND ITS ELEMENTAL MALICE...
THEN...
I CAN THINK AGAIN...SO I'M STILL ME...
NOW I'VE DEVAPORIZED, I'M ADRIFT IN SPACE AGAIN...
PHEW! A RELIEF! I WAS FOND OF THIS BODY OF MINE!
A BELT OF CLOUD AHEAD... HIDING A PLANET WRAPPED IN ITS OWN ATMOSPHERE...
I OUGHT TO BE ASKING MYSELF QUESTIONS...
LIKE... HOW AM I SURVIVING IN SPACE? WHAT FORCE IS CONTROLLING ME?
BUT ONLY ONE THING CONCERNS ME NOW... WHAT KIND OF A PLANET AM I LANDING ON?

2076
STALAGMITES!
THE CLOUD'S CONDENSING...ON HILLS? PILLARS OF ROCK?
SPIRES OF QUARTZ... PIERCING THE CLOUDS ...FORMED BY DEPOSITS OF LIME AND SALT FROM THE ATMOSPHERE...
A CRYSTAL PLANET!
THE GROUND A MIRROR... EVERY STONE A PRISM...
A PLANET PETRIFIED... EVEN THE SEA CRYSTALLISED IN ITS EBB AND FLOW...
AND WAVES OF CRYSTAL, FROZEN IN THE INSTANT OF BREAKING...
2077
AXA ON THE CRYSTAL PLANET...
IT MUST BE UNINHABITED... OR IS IT?
SOME KIND OF TRAPPED CREATURE... BUT DEAD, OBVIOUSLY...
2078
KRAK!
ONLY NOTHING IS OBVIOUS, IN SPACE!
MAYBE THIS STRANGE FLINT OF MINE HAS REVIVED THE CREATURE...
YUK, BUT IT'S UGLY!
HRAR?
GLAG SHRIK!
AND IN AN UGLY MOOD, TOO...

SOK DIV UMERG!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE CREATURE'S SAYING...
BUT I'M NOT HANGING AROUND FOR A TRANSLATION...
OH NO! NOW IT'S BREATHING FIRE!
PHOOR
2080
Romero
HOW TO FIGHT A WALKING FLAME-THROWER?
PHOOSH!
IT'S MELTING THE CRYSTAL BOULDER TO GET AT ME...
2081
VARG ID GLUBBEN!
OH!
FOR ALL I KNOW THE CREATURE IS A FLESH-EATER...
HRAR?
KLANG!
DUR!
PHOOR!
2082
AT LEAST I'VE STUNNED IT...
THE CREATURE'S PARALYSED... AT MY MERCY...
2083
THE SENSIBLE THING IS TO KILL IT... NOW, WHILE I HAVE THE CHANCE...
YET MY HEART SAYS... NO!

THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL CREATURE LIES AT AXA'S MERCY, BUT...
I CAN'T DO IT!
Romero
THE CREATURE HAS AS MUCH RIGHT TO LIVE AS I HAVE... WHY SHOULD I KILL IT?
SO GO YOUR OWN WAY, EXTRA... THE UNIVERSE IS BIG ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF US...
OHH!
I'VE FALLEN INTO A CREVASSE ...A DEEP ONE...!
NOT JUST DEEP... BOTTOMLESS!
CRAZY!
THE CREVASSE WAS A FISSURE IN THE SOLID MASS OF THE PLANET... A HOLE RIGHT THROUGH ITS CENTRE...
AND I'VE FALLEN THROUGH THE PLANET... INTO SPACE ON THE OTHER SIDE...
AXA ADRIFT IN SPACE...
THAT'S NO ASTEROID, AHEAD...
ORBITING THE DARK PLANET... A MAN-MADE SPACESHIP...
HALLO! ASTRONAUTS? AREN'T YOU GOING TO WELCOME ME?

NO ASTRONAUTS, EITHER! THE SPACESHIP IS EMPTY... ABANDONED...
STRANGE... NO ANSWER...
A SHIP ORBITING IN SPACE, AND FULLY OPERATIONAL ...WITHOUT A CREW...
2028
BUT I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A RIDE TO THE PLANET DOWN THERE...
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SPACESHIP'S CREW IS A MYSTERY... BUT EVERYTHING IS A MYSTERY IN SPACE...
LIKE THE WAY I'M PILOTING THIS SPACESHIP, WITHOUT SKILL OR TRAINING...
2029
THE SPACESHIP TOUCHES DOWN SAFELY...
A DARK PLANET, ITS SOLAR HEAT SOURCE ECLIPSED...
THE SENSORS ARE RECORDING ZERO TEMPERATURE... ABSENCE OF LIFE FORMS... ORGANIC STERILITY...
TO THINK THAT THE ONLY MOVING THINGS ON THIS PLANET ARE ME AND MY SHADOW...
2030
BUT WAIT! MORE SHADOWS, MOVING ACROSS THE ROCK WALL!
BUT SHADOWS OF WHAT? THERE'S NOTHING HERE TO CAST THEM!
2031

2091
THERE'S ONLY ONE WORD FOR THIS... UNEARTHLY!
DISEMBODIED SHADOWS, DRAGGING MY OWN SHADOW AWAY!
NO! YOU CAN'T TAKE MY SHADOW FROM ME!
KLANG
BUT HOW TO FIGHT THEM? SHADOWS ON A WALL? CAST BY NOTHING?
2092
AXA'S SHADOW IS DRAGGED AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS...
IT HURTS! HAVING YOUR SHADOW TORN AWAY FROM YOU!
2094
IS THIS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO DIE?
THIS IS A HORRIBLE PLANET... DARK AND LIFELESS...
DEATHLY COLD...
OR WAS I DEAD ALREADY, WHEN THEY TOOK MY SHADOW AWAY FROM ME?
2095

SUDDENLY...
WHOOSH
FLAME!
IT'S THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL CREATURE WHOSE LIFE I SPARED ON THE CRYSTAL PLANET...
BREATHING FIRE TO SET THE DEADWOOD ALIGHT...
SAVING MY LIFE NOW, AS I SAVED HIS...
TALK MORE, WOMAN...
YOU CAN TALK TOO... WONDERFUL!
2097
AND THIS IS WONDERFUL! BLESSED LIGHT AND WARMTH! I WAS DYING OF COLD!
GOOD...I'VE SYNTHESISED YOUR SPEECH-PATTERNS NOW... WE CAN CONVERSE...
WE MET ON ANOTHER PLANET, EXTRA... HOW DID YOU FOLLOW ME HERE?
BY WILLING IT... A KINETIC TECHNIQUE... I'VE TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE UNIVERSE...
I WISHED TO SHOW MY GRATITUDE TO YOU... FOR ME, TO WISH IS TO ACT...
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOUR FEELINGS, EXTRA... BUT YOU DON'T LOOK AS HIGHLY-EVOLVED AS YOU SOUND...
HO HO HO!
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ALIVE, AXA?
WELL... TWENTY ODD YEARS!
QUITE! AND BY YOUR RECKONING I'VE LIVED FOR TWENTY THOUSAND!

I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOUR FEELINGS, EITHER, AXA... BUT YOUR BRAIN IS MINISCULE...
WHEREAS MINE... WELL, LOOK AT IT! AND EVERY CELL FULLY UTILISED, UNLIKE YOURS!
OH ALL RIGHT, EXTRA...
YOU'RE FAR OLDER THAN ME, AND FAR CLEVERER!
BUT YOU'RE PRETTIER, EH?
NOW THE SUN'S COMING UP! AND WHAT A SUN!
YES, A PLANET OF EXTREMES... DEATHLY COLD AT NIGHT, A FURNACE BY DAY...
INSTANT VEGETATION AS THE SUN RISES... THE VALLEY WILL BE A SWAMP JUNGLE BY THE TIME WE REACH IT...
WAIT, EXTRA! I'D FORGOTTEN SOMETHING...
MY SHADOW! I LOST IT IN THE CAVE, BUT NOW IT'S COME BACK TO ME!
FINE...
BUT WITH THIS SUN BEATING DOWN, I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SHADOW OF THE JUNGLE...
WHY ARE YOU SPACE-TRAVELLING, AXA, ANYWAY? I MEAN, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
DIDN'T I TELL YOU? I'M ON A QUEST...
FOR THE STAR KEY... WHICH WAS STOLEN FROM EARTH BY AN EVIL GALACTIC INTELLIGENCE...
THAT SOUNDS WEIRD, DOESN'T IT?
NOT TO ME...

BUT THEN I'M WEIRD MYSELF, AREN'T I?
WELL... NOW YOU COME TO MENTION IT...
AND THIS SWAMP IS WEIRD, TOO... I WISH I HADN'T LOST MY SWORD IN THE CAVE...
DON'T JUST SAY IT, AXA ...REALLY WISH!
AND I'LL GET MY SWORD BACK? HMM... I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW BEST...
HUH? YOU REALLY DO KNOW BEST, EXTRA!
MY SWORD! HANDED BACK TO ME, FROM THE WATERS OF THE LAKE!
IT'S UNEARTHLY!
OF COURSE IT IS, AXA... YOU DO AMUSE ME...
SO SMUG ABOUT YOUR OWN LITTLE CRUMBS OF KNOWLEDGE ...SO BAFFLED BY ANYTHING OUTSIDE YOUR OWN PUNY EXPERIENCE...
I DON'T THINK I LIKE BEING LAUGHED AT BY AN EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL CREATURE...
BUT I'M GLAD I GOT MY SWORD BACK...
YOU MAY NEED IT...
GRAAH!
OH NO! EVOLUTION REALLY GOT ITS WIRES CROSSED THERE!

AXA ATTACKED BY THE CAT-GIRL...
SKREEK!
INSTANT HOSTILITY... THAT SEEMS TO BE THE RULE IN SPACE...
AND THE HEAVENS LOOK SO COOL, SO SERENE FROM EARTH...
AH... EXTRA'S TURNING ON THE FIRE-POWER...
HEERC!
THE CAT GIRL'S TERRIFIED... AND I DON'T BLAME HER
2109
THAT'S ENOUGH, EXTRA! SHE'S MORE GIRL THAN CAT NOW!
DON'T BE SCARED... NO ONE'S GOING TO HURT YOU...
YOU SPEAK IT WELL, AXA ...THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF LOVE...
PURR!
2110
BUT LET ME TALK TO THE CREATURE IN HER OWN LANGUAGE...
SKRAG NUK?
ERG!
GROCH LAM!
HAG-HAG!
WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT?
YOUR ENEMY, AXA... THE EVIL INTELLIGENCE NAMED ERG...
2111

IT SEEMS THAT ERG RULES THIS PLANET... AND HAS ORDERED ALL ITS CREATURES TO DESTROY YOU...
SO HE'S HERE? THIS EVIL INTELLIGENCE WHO HAS THE STAR KEY I'M SEEKING?
CHOK! RUH GRAW!
YES, HE'S HERE... AND NOT FAR AWAY...
WE SHAN'T LEARN ANY MORE FROM THE CAT-GIRL...
SHE MUST BE TERRIFIED OF ERG...
MAYBE YOU SHOULD BE TOO, AXA...
YOU MEAN I OUGHT TO ABANDON THE QUEST FOR THE STAR KEY?
NEVER! I HAVEN'T TRAVELLED HALFWAY ACROSS SPACE TO GIVE UP NOW!
AXA SEEKS HER ARCH-ENEMY...
ERG MAY BE ANYWHERE ... ASSUME ANY FORM...
DANGEROUS TO HUNT A BODILESS INTELLIGENCE IN THE DARK... WE OUGHT TO FIND SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT...
TALKING OF BODIES... WHAT DOES THE SHAPE OF THAT HILL REMIND YOU OF?
DON'T LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN AWAY WITH YOU, AXA...
BUT YOU MUST ADMIT THE CAVE-ENTRANCE LOOKED LIKE AN EAR...
AND IF THIS WERE AN EAR-DRUM, YOUR LAUGHTER WOULD ECHO JUST AS IT'S DOING NOW...
HA! HA!

SO YOU THINK WE'RE INSIDE A GIGANTIC HUMAN BODY, DO YOU?
NO NEED TO SNEER, EXTRA...
WHAT DOES THIS REMIND YOU OF? A MOUTH? RIGHT!
OH! AND THIS COULD BE THE WINDPIPE!
NO! THE IDEA'S CRAZY!
YOU'RE RIGHT, EXTRA... I'M IMAGINING THINGS...
YET I'VE SEEN CAVERNS LIKE THIS ON THE BODY-SCANNER IN THE DOME...
THE MEDICS CALLED IT THE THORACIC-CAVITY ... THE INTERIOR OF A HUMAN CHEST... AND WE'RE INSIDE THIS ONE!
DON'T LEAVE ME ON MY OWN, EXTRA... FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE I'M SCARED...
OH NO! AND I'VE GOT REASON TO BE!
WHAT KIND OF CREATURES INHABIT A GIANT HUMAN BODY?
AT LEAST THERE'S ONLY ONE OF THEM...
OH NO! THE CREATURE'S SPLIT INTO TWO!
AND NOW THEY'RE SPLITTING INTO FOUR!

A BIZARRE ENCOUNTER FOR AXA...
ORGANISMS THAT REPRODUCE THEMSELVES BY SPLITTING...
I LEARNT ABOUT THEM IN THE DATA BANK AT THE DOME...
BACTERIA! THE GERMS INSIDE A HUMAN BODY!
BUT THESE GERMS ARE MONSTERS...
IT FIGURES... THEY'RE INFESTING A GIANT BODY ...THE ONE I'M TRAPPED INSIDE...
A NIGHTMARE WITHIN A NIGHTMARE!
AAH! THE GERMS ARE RELEASING ME!
THEY'RE BEING ATTACKED THEMSELVES ...AND I CAN GUESS WHAT THOSE GLOBULAR CREATURES ARE...
BACTERIOPHAGE... VIRUS ORGANISMS WHICH DESTROY BACTERIA...
BUT I CAN DO WITHOUT THE BIOLOGY DEMONSTRATION...
ESPECIALLY WHEN I'M INSIDE THE SAME GIANT BODY AS THE BACTERIA ARE...
EXTRA! OH IT'S GOOD TO FIND A FRIEND AGAIN!

WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, AXA!
YOU AGREE WITH ME NOW? WE'RE INSIDE A GIANT BODY?
AGREED... THIS IS THE CHEST CAVITY...
THE PROBLEM IS TO FIND OUR WAY UP TO THE HEAD AGAIN, AND THE MOUTH...
OH, IT'S A LABYRINTH ... WE'LL NEVER ESCAPE FROM THIS HORRIBLE BODY...
AND NOW INSECTS ARE SWARMING UP MY LEG!
DID I SAY INSECTS?
THIS IS WEIRD...
A FRESH SHOCK FOR AXA...
MICRO-SCOPIC MEN, CRAWLING OVER MY BODY...
I CAN'T BEAR THIS!..
WAIT, AXA! I'LL FIND OUT WHO THESE TINY MEN ARE!
THEY LOOK LIKE SOLDIERS TO ME...
ON WAR MANOEUVRES BETWEEN MY BREASTS!

THE TINY SOLDIERS AREN'T HOSTILE NOW, AXA
SO I SEE! THEY'RE WAVING A WHITE FLAG IN SURRENDER!
LIFT THEM OFF YOUR BODY GENTLY... I'LL EXPLAIN LATER...
IT'S BEYOND EXPLANATION! FIRST WE FIND OURSELVES INSIDE A GIANT HUMAN BODY...
THEN WE'RE ATTACKED BY AN ARMY OF MICROSCOPIC MEN...
THEY'RE THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF THIS PLANET, AXA...
THE LITTLE MEN'S PLANET WAS INVADED BY THIS GIANT MAN WHOSE BODY WE'RE INSIDE...
IT WAS A BODY BEING USED BY THE EVIL INTELLIGENCE, ERG...
THE LITTLE MEN COUNTER-ATTACKED, AND EXPLODED A LAND-MINE AGAINST ERG'S CHEST...
OF COURSE, ERG HIMSELF ESCAPED AND LEFT HIS WRECKED BODY LYING HERE...
THERE'S THE JAGGED HOLE IN THE CHEST, LEFT BY THE EXPLOSION...
AN ESCAPE ROUTE FOR US!

AND WHERE IS ERG NOW?
GOOD QUESTION...
WE COULD LOOK AROUND FROM THE TOP OF THAT HILL...
BUT LOOK FOR WHAT? YOU CAN'T SEE AN INTELLIGENCE...
ERG CAN TAKE ANY SHAPE HE WANTS... A STONE, RAINWATER, A BLADE OF GRASS...
THERE'S NO GRASS ON THIS HILLTOP...
NO. IT'S BEEN SCORCHED BY INTENSE HEAT...
STOP, AXA! DON'T TOUCH THAT BALL OF BLACK ROCK!
ERG MUST HAVE BLASTED HIMSELF INTO SPACE FROM THIS HILLTOP...
SO WHAT DOES THAT MAKE THIS BLACK BALL?
GALACTIC ROCK? STAR DEBRIS? DANGER!
THE WRONG WORD TO USE! DANGER FASCINATES AXA!
THE BLACK BALL IS GLOWING!
AS I FEARED... GALACTIC DEBRIS... PERHAPS A FRAGMENT OF ERG HIMSELF...

BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL! SHINING LIKE A STAR!
AND IT'S TAKING YOU AWAY FROM ME, AXA!
DRAWING YOU INTO SPACE, WHERE ERG IS WAITING FOR YOU!
Romero
FULFIL YOUR DESTINY, AXA... BUT REMEMBER YOUR UGLY FRIEND EXTRA...
AXA SOARS INTO SPACE...
A SHOOTING STAR AMONG THE STARS...
THE STAR-ROCK IN MY HANDS IS TAKING ME SOMEWHERE...
YES, IT'S HOMING ON THAT NEBULA AHEAD...
A CLOUD OF INTERSTELLAR MATTER...
THE COMPONENTS OF A NEW PLANET, OR THE DEBRIS OF AN OLD ONE...
WHAT NOW? A METEOR SHOWER, MOVING TOWARDS ME...
NOT JUST MOVING... HURTLING...
THE METEORS ARE BOMBARDING ME! PROPELLED BY SOME HOSTILE FORCE!

MY STAR ROCK HAS DIVERTED THE METEOR SHOWER.. PROTECTED ME...
AND NOW I KNOW WHAT HURLED THE METEORS AT ME...
THE NEBULA HAS ASSUMED A HUMAN SHAPE...
THE PHYSICAL FORM OF MY ENEMY. THE EVIL INTELLIGENCE ERG...
ERG MEANS TO DESTROY ME...
MY STAR-ROCK COULD PROTECT ME AGAIN...
YES! IT'S DEFLECTED THE GIANT FIST OF THE NEBULA!
THE METEOR FIST HAS DISINTEGRATED...
FPARCH!
A SCREAM OF PAIN FROM THE NEBULA...
IT MUST HAVE HUMAN EMOTIONS, AS WELL AS A HUMAN SHAPE...
THE VOICE OF ERG...
YES, EARTH WOMAN! I HAVE EMOTIONS, AND A VOICE!
ONCE I HAD A BODY, TOO... THE PLANET WHOSE SPIRIT I WAS...
ALAS, MY PLANET DISINTEGRATED, MILLENIA AGO... THE NEBULA YOU SEE IS ITS WRECKAGE...

ALL THAT HOLDS THE NEBULA TOGETHER IS THE STAR KEY...
THE KEY YOU STOLE FROM EARTH!—
MY NEED WAS GREAT... WITHOUT THE UNITY IT BESTOWS, MY WORLD WOULD FALL APART...
BUT MY WORLD FELL APART BECAUSE YOU STOLE THE STAR KEY...
DISUNITY HAS BEDEVILLED EARTH EVER SINCE... NATION AGAINST NATION, PEOPLE AGAINST PEOPLE...
WHICH IS WHY I HAVE COME TO TAKE BACK THE STAR KEY...
NO!
I MUST REGAIN THE STAR KEY FOR HUMANITY...
NEVER!
I WILL DESTROY YOU FIRST!
ERG'S METEOR HAND IS CRUSHING ME!
BUT IF I CAN REACH THE STAR KEY, HIS GRIP WILL BE BROKEN...
GOT IT!

THE STAR KEY IS MINE!
IT'S A TINY HEART! GLOWING LIKE THE FIRES OF CREATION!
CURSE YOU, EARTH WOMAN! YOU HAVE DESTROYED ME!
CREATION AND DESTRUCTION ... THE ETERNAL CYCLE...
THE STAR KEY COULD RECREATE UNITY ON EARTH...
BUT ITS LOSS HAS DESTROYED THE NEBULA WHICH WAS ALL THAT HELD THE SPIRIT OF ERG...
AND DISPERSED IT TO THE BLACK VOID OF THE UNIVERSE...
AXA HAS CARRIED OUT HER QUEST AND REGAINED THE STAR KEY...
BUT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME NOW?
NO! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
SOLOM!
I SEE YOU'RE BACK TO EARTH, AXA!
THOUGH TO BE PRECISE, YOU NEVER LEFT IT...
YOU MEAN I'VE BEEN SITTING IN THIS CHAIR ALL THE TIME?
THAT JOURNEY INTO SPACE WAS ALL IN MY MIND?

THE ELECTRODE I IMPLANTED IN YOUR SKULL WAS LINKED TO A COMPUTER...
THE COMPUTER PROJECTED YOUR IMAGINATION INTO SPACE ...CREATED ALL THE ADVENTURES YOU EXPERIENCED...
SO I'VE JUST BEEN TAKING PART IN A VIDEO GAME
IT WASN'T JUST A GAME, AXA...
THE STAR KEY! IT'S STILL IN MY HAND!
DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND IT... THERE MUST ALWAYS BE SOME MYSTERIES LEFT UNEXPLAINED IN THE UNIVERSE...
BUT THE KEY IS A HEART! WHAT CAN THAT UNLOCK?
THE DOOR TO HAPPINESS...
TAKE THE KEY WITH YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH OUR OWN WORLD... ONE DAY YOU MAY FIND THE DOOR...
AXA! WE THOUGHT YOU'D GOT LOST DOWN THERE!
YOU'VE BEEN GONE ALL OF TEN MINUTES! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?
YOU'D NEVER BELIEVE ME IF I TOLD YOU...
BUT ITS AN EXPERIENCE I'LL NEVER FORGET...
...AS LONG AS I'VE GOT A HEART...

AXA
THE BETRAYED
A GIGANTIC WATER-FALL!
BUT MAN-MADE... A DAM BUILT BY THE OLD PEOPLE TO CREATE HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER...
AND THEN WRECKED IN THE TURMOIL OF THE GREAT CONTAMINATION...
THE STORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS ... NATURE BREAKING OUT OF MAN'S HARNESS...
AFTER HER FANTASY IN SPACE, AXA HAS COME BACK TO EARTH AND TRAVELLED ON...
BUT IT LOOKS AS IF SOMEBODY HAS BEEN TRYING TO REPAIR THE DAM...
HOLES HAVE BEEN PLUGGED IN THE CONCRETE WALL... CRACKS FILLED...
HOW COULD MEN DO THAT, WITHOUT MACHINES?
HUTS DOWN THERE, MATT... LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND SOMEBODY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION...
BUT MARK AND MARTHA HAVE DROPPED BEHIND AGAIN... I'LL GIVE THEM A PROD WITH MY BRACELET TRANSMITTER...
YOU TREAT THOSE ROBOTS OF YOURS LIKE SERVANTS, DON'T YOU?
YOU THINK ROBOT MARK RESENTS MY GIVING THE ORDERS?
COULD BE!
BUT WHAT WAS THAT?
GRUNCH!
A BOULDER ABOVE US, MOVING!
LOOK OUT!
WAIT, MATT ... THERE'S SOMETHING I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

THE BOULDER'S NOT TOPPLING... IT'S BEING LIFTED...
BUT IT WOULD TAKE ENORMOUS POWER TO RAISE A MASS OF ROCK LIKE THAT...
IF IT FALLS, AXA, YOU WON'T BE ALIVE TO ASK QUESTIONS!
STRANGE HANDS, ON THE MASSIVE BOULDER...
I WARNED YOU, AXA! THE BOULDER'S FALLING!
WRONG...
IT WAS THROWN!
HELL! AXA!
YES?
WHEW! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN A LUMP OF ROCK TO CRUSH HER!
THE BOULDER DIDN'T JUST FALL, MATT! IT WAS THROWN AT US BY SOMETHING... OR SOMEBODY...
YES! LOOK! A MAN UP THERE!
NO MAN COULD HAVE LIFTED THAT BOULDER... YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS, AXA...
AM I?

IT WOULD EXPLAIN HOW THE DAM WAS REPAIRED, WITHOUT THE HELP OF MACHINES...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THAT MAN MUST HAVE SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH!
A LABOUR FORCE WITH THE MUSCLE-POWER OF BULLDOZERS...
2164
IF MEN LIKE THE ONES WE SAW ARE LIVING IN THOSE HUTS, WE'LL HAVE TO WATCH IT...
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT IF THEY'RE HOSTILE...
2165
I DON'T NEED A BOULDER ON MY HEAD TO CONVINCE ME...
BUT THEY REALLY ARE WEIRD... FANTASTICALLY STRONG, YET DWARF-LIKE...
AND NOTICE SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THEM?
THEY'RE ALL IDENTICAL!
MAYBE THEY HAVEN'T SEEN US YET... AND I'D RATHER THEY DIDN'T...
2166
TOO LATE! ONE OF THE MONSTERS IS COMING THIS WAY!
WE DON'T KNOW THEY'RE MONSTERS, MATT...
KRAAK!
BUT YOU MAY HAVE A POINT!

ONE BLOW FROM A FIST. AND THE BOULDER SPLITS...
I'D BETTER INTRODUCE MYSELF... WITH COLD STEEL...
LEAVE THE BRUTE TO ME, AXA!
WAIT, MATT! THIS IS NO TIME FOR YOUR MACHO PRIDE!
AAH!
THUNK!
HIS BELLY'S LIKE IRON!
I DON'T USUALLY ATTACK UNKNOWN STRANGERS...
BUT THIS ONE I'VE GOT TO KILL...
KLANG!
IF HE CAN BE KILLED!
HE'S NOT HUMAN AT ALL!
WHAT KIND OF A FREAK IS IT, AXA?
A MACHINE!

THAT EXPLAINS A LOT OF THINGS! THESE AREN'T MEN, THEY'RE ROBOTS!
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN USED TO REPAIR THE DAM! THEIR POWER WOULD MAKE THEM INVALUABLE!
LETHAL, TOO! A BLOW FROM THOSE FISTS WOULD SQUASH US LIKE FLIES!
I WISH WE COULD TALK TO THOSE ROBOTS...
AND SAY WHAT? 'DON'T HURT US'?
THEY'RE OUT OF CONTROL! BULLDOZERS WITH AN URGE TO KILL!
I'M DAMNED IF A MACHINE'S GOING TO KILL ME!
THOSE ROBOTS MUST HAVE BEEN DESIGNED AND BUILT BY MEN...
SO?
SO THERE'S A WAY TO CONTROL THEM, IF WE COULD ONLY FIND IT...
AND NOT BY FORCE...
MAYBE WE COULD REASON WITH THEM...
YOU'RE NOT DEALING WITH ROBOT MARK NOW, AXA... THESE ARE CRUDE MACHINES, WITHOUT EMOTIONS...
IF THEY CAN HATE, THEY CAN LOVE TOO...

BUT IF I'M WRONG...
NO! SOMETHING'S DISTRACTED THE ROBOT! OR RATHER, SOMEONE!
ROBOT MARK!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHO ARE THESE MEN, AXA?
THEY'RE NOT MEN, THEY'RE ROBOTS! LIKE YOU, MARK!
NOT LIKE HIM! HE IS SUPERIOR!
OH, MARK! YOU'VE SAVED MY LIFE!
THOSE CRETINS THREATENED YOU?
WE DID NOT KNOW THE HUMANS WERE YOUR SLAVES, SUPERIOR ONE!
FASCINATING!
THEY THINK WE'RE SLAVES? OF ROBOT MARK?
THE ROBOTS ARE GROVELLING TO MARK! WORSHIPPING HIM!
KING!

ROBOT MARK HAILED AS A KING? WHAT A GIGGLE!
DO YOU MIND, MARTHA?
A FEMALE ROBOT! AND A BEAUTIFUL ONE!
QUEEN!
OH I SAY!
AXA'S AFFECTIONATE LAUGHTER IS MISUNDERSTOOD...
THE WOMAN MOCKS OUR KING?
STOP! DON'T HARM HER!
GULP... THIS ISN'T SO FUNNY!
AS YOUR KING I COMMAND YOU! DROP THE WOMAN!
I WISH ROBOT MARK WOULD CHOOSE HIS WORDS MORE CAREFULLY!
I'VE GOT YOU, AXA...
THESE ROBOTS CERTAINLY DETEST HUMANS!
PRETEND TO BE MY SLAVE, AXA... THE ONLY WAY TO PLACATE THE CRETINS...
TO HELL WITH THAT! I'M NO ONE'S SLAVE!

HMM... BUT I'M NOT ARGUING WITH THAT...
FACE IT, MATT! THE ROBOTS ARE MASTERS HERE, AND OUR MARK IS THEIR KING!
SO...
THAT'S BETTER, SLAVES!
YOU CAN FIND YOURSELVES A CAVE UP THERE, TO SLEEP IN... GOOD ENOUGH FOR MENIALS...
THE QUEEN AND I WILL REQUIRE HUTS...
YOU SHALL HAVE EVERY COMFORT, KING...
DAMN ROBOT MARK! HE'S ENJOYING THIS!
WE'RE LOOKING FOR ROBOT MARK!
YOU MEAN THE KING, SLAVE! IN THE HUT!
WELL...THEY CERTAINLY MADE HIM COMFORT-ABLE...
AND WE HAD TO SLEEP ROUGH IN A LOUSY CAVE!
DON'T BE SO IRRITABLE, MATT... LET ROBOT MARK HAVE HIS HOUR OF GLORY...
HE'S HAD TWELVE! SHAKE YOUR CIRCUITS YOU METAL MORON!
YOU DARE TO MOLEST OUR KING?
UNK!
KLANG!

UUH!
THUNK!
THE ROBOT WILL KILL MATT! STOP HIM, MARK!
SPARE THE WRETCHED HUMAN! I'LL DEAL WITH HIM MYSELF!
GO NOW!
THOSE WALKING BULLDOZERS SCARE THE HELL OUT OF ME, AXA...
SO HUMOUR MARK... HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN CONTROL THEM...
HAVE YOU FOUND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT THE ROBOTS, MARK?
MY SUBJECTS? PLENTY...
THEY'RE CALLED CLODS...
MASS-PRODUCED IN THE WEST. FOR HEAVY CONSTRUCTION WORK...
THE ENGINEERS AT THIS SITE HIRED A SQUAD OF THEM. TO BUILD THE DAM...
A USEFUL REPLACEMENT FOR CRANES AND BULLDOZERS...
SO WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ENGINEERS?
DON'T TELL ME THE ROBOTS KILLED THEIR HUMAN MASTERS!
RIGHT! THE ENGINEERS ABUSED THEIR MECHANICAL LABOUR FORCE...
THE CLODS ARE MACHINES, BUT THEY HAVE RUDIMENTARY EMOTIONS...
...LIKE HATRED! THEY MASSACRED THE ENGINEERS...
SINCE THEN, THE CLODS HAVE BEEN IDLE AND LEADERLESS...

WE OUGHT TO FIND WORK FOR THE CLODS BEFORE THEY WRECK THE PLACE...
LEAVE THIS TO ME, AXA! I'M THEIR KING. REMEMBER!
THE CLODS WILL RESUME CONSTRUCTION WORK ON THE DAM! I COMMAND IT!
ROBOT MARK'S GETTING ABOVE HIMSELF!
BUT I HAVE TO HAND IT TO MARK... HE'S GOT THOSE CLODS BUSY AGAIN...
TWO OF YOU GO DOWN INTO THE CANYON AND RECOVER THOSE CONCRETE BLOCKS FROM THE RIVER BANK!
THEY SEEM RELUCTANT TO GO... SOMETHING DOWN THERE SCARES THEM...
THAT EVENING...
TWO OF THE LABOUR FORCE ARE MISSING...
THEY'RE THE TWO CLODS YOU SENT DOWN INTO THE CANYON, MARK...
NO! DANGER DOWN THERE!
WE'LL GO AND LOOK FOR THEM...
IF THE CLODS ARE SCARED, THE DANGER MUST BE REAL...
BUT THERE'S NOTHING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CANYON EXCEPT THE RIVER... AND SOME CAVES IN THE ROCKS...
OH NO! THE DANGER'S REAL, ALL RIGHT!

THE MISSING CLODS! RIPPED TO PIECES!
WHAT KIND OF A MONSTER COULD DO THAT TO TWO HIGH-POWERED ROBOTS?
WHIRR!
KLANK!
UHUH... WE'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT...
THE MONSTER OF THE CANYON...
KLANK!
A NIGHTMARE! ON WHEELS!
NO NEED FOR ALARM, AXA... IT'S A MERE CLOCKWORK TOY TO FRIGHTEN CHILDREN...
GULP!
FLASH!
RUN, MARK! YOU'VE SEEN WHAT THAT DEVILISH TOY DID TO THE CLODS!
DON'T REMIND ME!
KLANG!
LUCKILY ITS CONTROLS SEEM UNSOPHISTICATED ...IT HASN'T TURNED ON ME...
KRUNCH!
THAT'S WRECKED THE MECHANICAL MONSTER!
CURIOUS... IT IGNORED YOU, AXA, BUT ATTACKED ME...
MAYBE IT WAS TURNED ON BY ROBOTS...
AN INTELLIGENT GUESS... ITS SENSORS MUST HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED BY METAL, NOT FLESH...

NOBLE KING! YOU HAVE DESTROYED THE MONSTER!
AHEM!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MARK... I'LL LET YOU TAKE THE CREDIT...
BUT WHAT DO THE CLODS KNOW ABOUT THAT MECHANICAL FREAK?
I'LL ASK HIM...
THE ENGINEERS BUILT THE MONSTER ...AND OTHERS, EVEN MORE TERRIBLE...
THEY WERE PROGRAMMED TO PROTECT THE ENGINEERS FROM US CLODS, AFTER WE REBELLED...
THE MONSTERS LURK IN THE CANYON, PREYING ON ANY ROBOT WHO COMES WITHIN REACH OF THEIR SENSORS AND TEETH...
TROUBLE, AXA?
FOR THE CLODS... BUT WE MUST HELP THEM...
NO, AXA! THIS IS ROBOT BUSINESS! NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!
MASTERFUL, ISN'T HE? I'M PROUD TO BE HIS QUEEN!
THAT METAL MADAM'S GOT DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR...
SO HAS ROBOT MARK...
THE CLODS HAVE MADE HIM THEIR KING... AND HE'S TAKING IT SERIOUSLY...
THE MECHANICAL BEASTS MUST BE EXTERMINATED! I WILL LEAD YOU TO VICTORY!

SILENCE, AXA!
YOU'LL NEED A PLAN FIRST, MARK...
NOW DON'T BE SILLY... I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THIS...
DID YOU HEAR ME, WOMAN?
2204
2205
AN UNPLEASANT SHOCK FOR AXA...
OH!
YOU HIT ME, MARK!
YES... BUT...
IT WAS ONLY TO IMPRESS THE CLODS... WE HAVE TO CONVINCE THEM THAT YOU'RE MY OBEDIENT SLAVE...
Romero
THAT METAL MORON! HE HURT YOU, AXA!
SSH...
THE CLODS THINK HE'S OUR MASTER... AND HE ONLY PRETENDED TO HIT ME...
AT LEAST, THAT'S HIS STORY...
2206
WE'RE RUNNING SHORT OF FOOD, MATT...
I'LL MAKE A HUNTING TRIP...
BUT NOT JUST NOW...
THE CLODS ARE BEHAVING ODDLY, AREN'T THEY?
NEXT MORNING...
2207
MANHANDLING CONCRETE BLOCKS... TO THE BOTTOM OF THE CANYON, FOR SOME CRAZY REASON

ROBOT MARK MUST BE LAUNCHING HIS ATTACK ON THE MECHANICAL BEASTS!
BY HEAVING CONCRETE BLOCKS AT THEM?
THAT'S WHAT WE HAVE TO FIND OUT...
I DON'T UNDERRATE MARK'S INTELLIGENCE AS YOU DO...BUT IF HE NEEDS HELP, I WANT TO BE AROUND...
SO THAT'S ROBOT MARK'S PLAN FOR NEUTRALISING THE CLOCKWORK KILLERS...
BLOCK THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE...WE'LL TRAP YOUR ENEMIES INSIDE...
URG!
WiRR!
HELP!
TRUST YOUR KING...
I CAN DEAL WITH ANY OF THE MECHANICAL BEASTS WHICH TRY TO ESCAPE...
STZZZ!
YOU ARE OUR KING INDEED!
NOW WE'LL SEAL ALL THE OTHER CAVES...AND LEAVE THE MECHANICAL BEASTS TO RUST AWAY INSIDE!
I HAVE TO HAND IT TO ROBOT MARK... HE'S THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING...
NOT QUITE...

SO WHAT'S THE FLAW IN ROBOT MARK'S PLAN?
HE'S ASSUMING THAT ALL THE CAVES ARE ON THE RIVERBANK...
BUT THE CAVE-SYSTEM MIGHT EXTEND UPWARDS...THERE MAY BE OTHER EXITS AT THE TOP OF THE HILL...
UNGUARDED... LIKE THIS ONE..
THE MECHANICAL BEASTS COULD ESCAPE FROM THIS CAVE, WHILE THE CLODS ARE BUSY ON THE RIVERBANK..
OH NO! ONE OF THEM FOLLOWED US OVER THE HILL!
WHIRR!
BUT YOU GUESSED RIGHT ABOUT THE BEASTS AX A...
WHIRR!
ONE OF THE CLOCKWORK KILLERS! A ROBOT PYTHON!
BUT ITS SENSORS ARE VECTORED ON THE CLOD, NOT ON ME...
URG!
THE CLODS ARE JUST ROBOTS THEMSELVES... AND HOSTILE TO HUMANS, ANYWAY...
BUT I MUST TRY TO SAVE THIS ONE...
TOO LATE...AND HERE COMES ANOTHER OF THE CLOCKWORK KILLERS...

THE CLOD'S METAL BODY IS ACTIVATING THE MECHANICAL BEASTS IN THE CAVE...
WE'LL HAVE THE WHOLE ROBOT MENAGERIE OUT HERE, AXA, IF YOU DON'T GET RID OF THAT WRECKED CLOD...
I WANT THE WHOLE MENAGERIE OUT HERE!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO, AXA?
USING THE WRECKED CLOD AS A BAIT...
ITS METAL BODY IS ACTIVATING THE ROBOT ANIMALS...DRAWING THEM OUT OF THE CAVE...
NOW WE CAN DESTROY THEM...
BY LURING THEM OVER THE CLIFF EDGE...
YOUR PLAN'S WORKING, AXA!
THE METAL BODY OF THE CLOD IS DRAWING THE ROBOT ANIMALS OUT OF THE CAVE, AND OVER THE CLIFF EDGE...
AND IT'S A DEATH DROP...
THE CLODS NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THOSE CLOCKWORK KILLERS AGAIN...
THEY'LL SOON BE JUST A HEAP OF JUNK AT THE BASE OF THE CLIFF...
KRUNCH!
KLANG!
YOU MUST HAVE LURED THEM ALL OUT OF THE CAVES, AXA...
NOT QUITE ALL...
WHIRR!

WIRR!
THE ENGINEERS WHO CONSTRUCTED THIS CLOCKWORK MENAGERIE HAD A SENSE OF HUMOUR...
OR MAYBE THE ROBOT OWL WAS DESIGNED TO LOCATE CLODS... AN EARLY-WARNING DEVICE...
WELL I THINK HE'S A PET!
THE CLODS SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO YOU, AXA, FOR GETTING RID OF THEIR ENEMIES...
HUU-WUU!
I'M NOT SO SURE... BUT WE'LL SOON FIND OUT...
YES... THE ROBOT OWL WAS REACTING TO THAT CLOD DOWN THERE...
HERE COMES ROBOT MARK...
WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND, CLOD?
THE MONSTERS WHO HAVE TERRORISED US FOR SO LONG — ALL DEAD!
GO ON, AXA! TELL MARK HOW YOU WIPED OUT THOSE CLOCKWORK KILLERS!
NO... WAIT...
OUR WISE AND NOBLE KING! HE HAS DESTROYED OUR ENEMIES!
WE SALUTE HIM!
OH... IT WAS NOTHING...
HELL! THAT METAL MISFIT! HE'S CLAIMING ALL THE CREDIT!

ARE YOU GOING TO LET ROBOT MARK GET AWAY WITH IT, AXA?
WHY NOT, IF IT KEEPS THE CLODS HAPPY?
MARK IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN CONTROL THEM... WE MUSTN'T DO ANYTHING TO WEAKEN HIS AUTHORITY...
TIME I WENT ON THAT HUNTING TRIP... IT COULD TAKE A FEW DAYS...
WATCH OUT FOR THOSE CLODS WHILE I'M AWAY, AXA! THEY'RE TROUBLE!
I'VE GOT MY ROBOT OWL TO WATCH OUT FOR ME...
AN ALARM IN THE NIGHT...
HUU WHUU!
CLODS! HERE TO ATTACK ME?
NO... THEY WERE JUST CHECKING ON ME... BUT WHY?
THE CLODS MUST BE PLOTTING SOME MISCHIEF...
A SECRET MEETING IN THE CONTROL ROOM ON THE DAM...
BUT THEY WON'T KEEP IT A SECRET FROM ME...

ROBOT MARK WILL RESTRAIN THE CLODS... I HOPE...
HEAR US, O KING!
YOU HAVE DESTROYED THE MECHANICAL MONSTERS WHICH TERRORISED US... BUT WE HAVE OTHER ENEMIES...
2220
OH NO... I CAN GUESS WHAT'S COMING NEXT...
OUT THERE BEYOND THE CANYON, THE LAND BELONGS TO THE HUMANS...
BUT WE ROBOTS ARE STRONGER THAN THEM... AND YOU, OUR KING, ARE MORE INTELLIGENT...
HMM...
DON'T LISTEN TO THEM, MARK!
2219
WITH YOU TO LEAD US, WE COULD ENSLAVE THE HUMANS WHO ONCE MADE SLAVES OF US...
THEN YOU WOULD BE KING OF ALL THIS LAND...
RULER OF VAST TERRITORIES...
2220
MARK THE GREAT!
NO!
M X
AXA! YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING!
BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
2221
YOU WOULDN'T LEAD THOSE SOULLESS ROBOTS IN A WAR AGAINST HUMANS! YOU COULDN'T MARK!

The last strip published, Saturday, November 16, 1985.

YOU FORGET WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO, WOMAN...
NO! DON'T, MARK!
YOU'RE MY ROBOT! DESIGNED AND BUILT FOR ME LONG AGO. BUT NOW MY LOVING FRIEND!
SACRILEGE! HE IS OUR KING!

I'VE GOT TO ESCAPE... WARN THE HUMAN SETTLERS IN THE AREA THAT THE ROBOTS ARE ON THE MARCH...
SEIZE THE WOMAN! SHE MUST NOT BETRAY OUR PLANS!
OH NO! CLODS EVERYWHERE!

The last strip drawn.

OUR KING SHALL DECIDE YOUR FATE, WOMAN
LET HIM!
ARE YOU THEIR KING, MARK, OR MY FRIEND? THAT'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO DECIDE!
LOCK HER UP! I MUST THINK!

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